

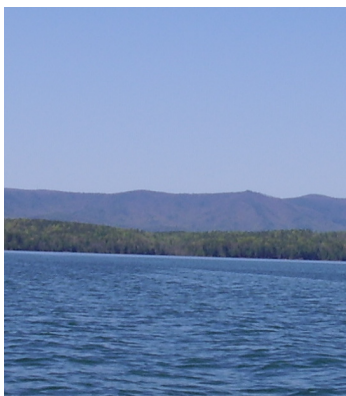
Lake James State Park (1) and the Park Expansion Property (2)

IMAGE COURTESY OF BURKE COUNTY

LAKE JAMES WAS CREATED BETWEEN 1916 AND 1923 WITH THE construction of three dams across the Catawba River and two tributaries, Paddy Creek and the Linville River. The canal at NC Highway 126 connects the two major impoundments forming a 6,500-acre lake. The lake has been used for generating hydroelectric power since its creation. Lake James State Park was established in 1987. Much of the existing 565-acre Lake James State Park is not suitable for facility development, and facilities are concentrated within about 60 acres on the far western extent of the park land. The 2,900-acre site for the park expansion is located about three miles northeast of the existing park facilities.

The new park parcel is located off Highway 126 on the northwestern shore of Lake James. The site extends from a narrow strip of land that is contiguous with the Canal Bridge, then north across Paddy Creek ending just short of the Linville River. The newly acquired property is over 2,900-acres with major land divisions identified as the Paddy Creek Peninsula, the Long Arm Peninsula and the Center Parcel.

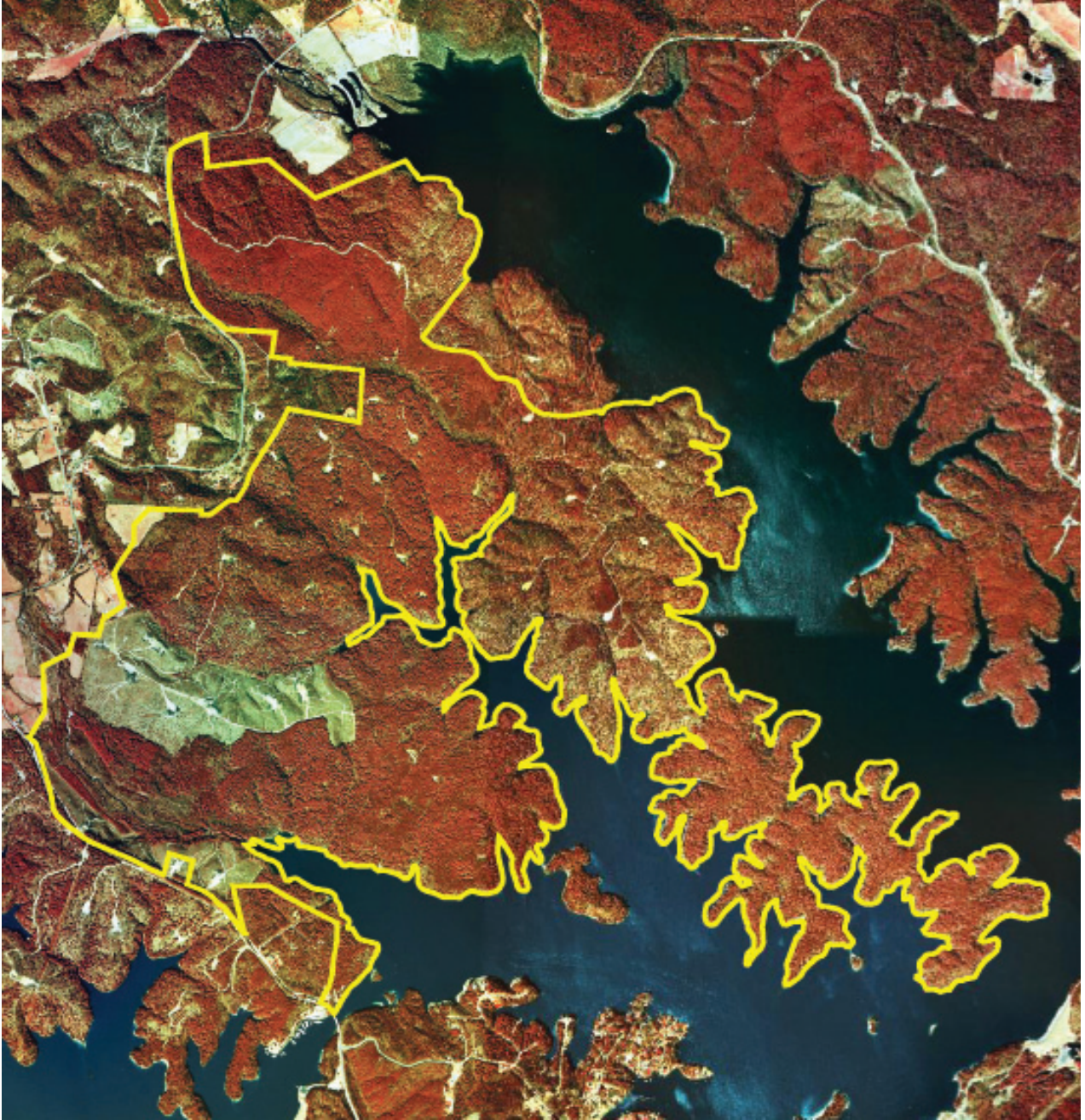
Prior to purchase by the state, the property was managed as a general timber resource. Over the years, access privileges had been granted to various hunting clubs and private parties. Access to cemeteries that existed prior to 1916 has been guaranteed. The extensive logging road and trail network has provided easy access for vehicles, horse riders and individuals on foot. The accessible areas along the shoreline have provided camp sites for generations of boaters on Lake James. Campsites and ad-hoc hunt camp structures dot the landscape. Old campfire remains and litter are evidence of decades of recreational use enjoyed by those privileged to use the property as well as those who needed no invitation.



### Legend

	Future State Park		Mountains-to-Sea Trail		Mountain Summits		Streets
	Future Gamelands		Blue Ridge Parkway		Upper Catawba River Canoe Trail Access		Highway
	County Access Areas		Conceptual Lake James Trail Corridor		Conceptual County Pocket Parks		Arterial
	Lake James State Park		Conceptual County Park Shoreline Spur		Points of Interest		County
	Conceptual County Park		Existing Canoe Portage Trail				City Limits
	Morganton Soccer Complex		Conceptual Overmountain Victory Trail - Foot Route				Glen Alpine
	Catawba Meadows Park		Overmountain Victory / Mountains-to-Sea Shared Trail				Morganton
	Pisgah National Forest		Overmountain Victory Trail - Motor Route				Lakes & Rivers
			Motor Route Overlap with Scenic Byway				Streams
			Catawba River Greenway				
			Pisgah Loop Scenic Byway				





Aerial infra-red photograph from around 2000. The new park land is outlined in yellow. In the photograph, evergreen forest reads as darker red masses, mixed and hardwood forest are the tan/red masses and open areas read as light green. The extensive logging road network is evident with turn out cul-de-sacs where the roads end.



Areas that have been harvested for wood products are dominated by pine forests of varying states of maturity. These areas are found on the less steep slopes and on the upland portions of the site.



Mixed and hardwood forests are found on the steeper slopes, along the shoreline and in the stream drainages. Above, a typical trail through the woodland moves parallel with the topography.



The park site is located along Lake James and is situated on the eastern escarpment of the Blue Ridge. The site consists of hilly land with generally gentle to moderate slopes and some steeply sloped areas.

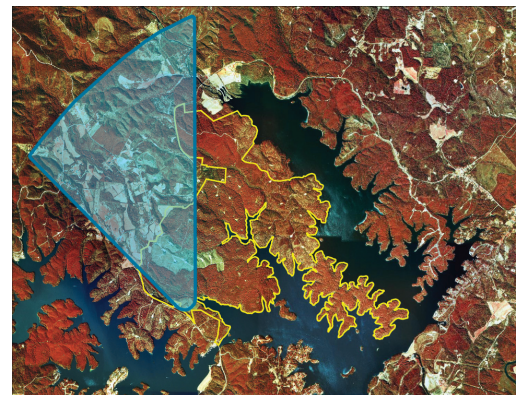
The impact of successive tree harvesting is clearly revealed through the vegetation on the site. Logging roads, which can be seen on aerial photograph on page 22, have been cleared and roughly maintained. Cleared processing areas, also quite evident on the aerial, are dotted with large brush piles where grasses, broom sedge, briars and pine seedlings have emerged. Areas more recently harvested in 1998 are now covered with pine thicket. These thickets dominate the upper areas of the western portion of Paddy Creek Peninsula and large parts within the Center Parcel. More mature stands of pine mixed with early succession hardwoods are characteristic of areas of more aged growth. The most mature woodlands are generally located across the steeper slopes, along the lake shore and across the bottom lands of the streams on site. In these areas, significantly larger trees are found. Oak forests are predominant along the dry slopes. The greatest concentration of mature woodland is on the Long Arm Peninsula.

No rare, endangered or threatened plant species have been identified within the new park land. Areas of standing dead timber are evidence of pine beetle infestations. More detailed biological information is available in the "State Site Survey Report" prepared by Marshall Ellis, Brian Strong and John Taggart for the Resource Management Program, Division of Parks and Recreation, in June 2005.

There are many locations within the park site that provide significant vistas to the Black Mountains to the west and north. From higher points and along ridges, Table Rock and the exposed rock face of Shortoff Mountain are easily identified. The vistas are often enhanced due to the reduced tree height across the areas of pine thicket.

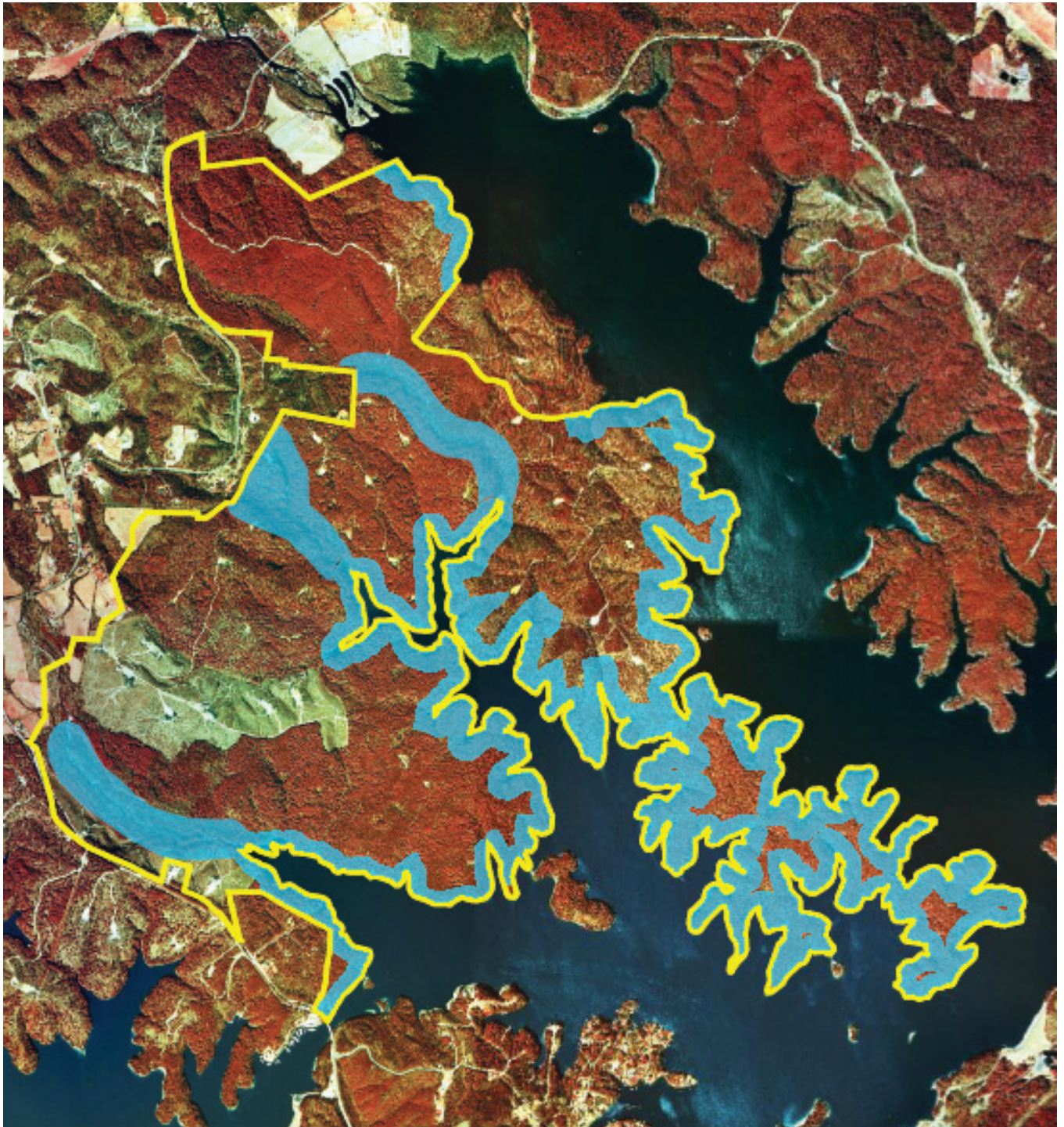


Viewshed from the central ridge off Paddy Creek Peninsula captures views of Table Rock and Shortoff Mountain



Viewshed from a high point along Highway 126 near the Canal Bridge





Above is an aerial infra-red photograph with an overlay of the 300' riparian buffer indicated in light blue. This buffer applies to the entire lake shoreline and to both sides of all streams within the park property. The new park property boundary is delineated by the yellow line.





The shoreline of Lake James presents two faces that vary with the seasons. In summer, water levels are maintained near full pond, which is 1,200 feet above sea level, in order to enhance recreational opportunities. At this time, the lake is drawn down as needed to manage storm water flows. Periods of extended drought may also lower the water elevation as well. With high water conditions, the forested slopes extend down to the lake edge. Fallen timber along the shoreline, then submerged, provides aquatic wildlife habitat. Each winter, the lake is drawn down in anticipation of increased runoff in the spring. With the lake level lowered, the undercut banks and rocky shoreline are exposed. Areas with sandy beaches are revealed and a land bridge is created linking the large island east of Paddy Creek Peninsula with the park land.

The new property at Lake James State Park was acquired with the assistance of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF). The CWMTF requires the state to maintain a riparian buffer in a manner that protects the water quality of Lake James. A buffer of 300 feet in width is required along each side of every stream in the new park land and along the shoreline of the lake. In addition, the state committed to several additional conditions for park development. All facilities must be located and designed in ways that will protect water quality. With the exception of trails, possible road crossings and water access facilities, all facilities must be located outside of the 300-foot buffer of the streams and the lakeshore. Road crossings of streams must be kept to a minimum.

There are approximately 24 miles of lake shoreline and four streams within the park site that will require riparian buffers. The required buffers are illustrated in the aerial photograph on page 24. Approximately 1,300 acres of park land will be committed to meet the buffer requirements. This is roughly 45 percent of the total park land. The impact of the buffers is particularly noted along Long Arm Peninsula. Where the land mass narrows, the buffer areas overlap leaving only a few isolated pockets with any potential for future facility development. Only primitive facilities are proposed at these areas with hike-in or boat-in access.



The new park land shoreline at high water. In summer, the woodland typically extends to the high water mark. During low water conditions, the lake level can drop up to 9 feet exposing the rocky slopes and undercut banks.



Paddy Creek and three smaller streams bisect the 2,900 acre park land. The 300' buffer is applied to each side of all streams. The riparian buffer is indicated in blue on the aerial photograph on page 24.





The composite Image above shows the 300' Riparian Buffer in blue overlaid with areas of steep slopes indicated in green. Areas outside of the Riparian Buffer and without steep slopes could be considered for facilities development.





Another limitation for the siting and development of park facilities is the topography of the land. Areas of steeper slopes are generally located along the lake shoreline and along the streams. Slopes that exceed 15 percent are generally more difficult and more expensive to develop. These more steeply sloped areas also present the greatest risk for soil erosion and runoff. Due to the historic logging practices associated with the park site, the more steeply sloped areas where timber harvesting was not practical are where the more mature woodlands are found. These areas represent a valuable visual resource and present a more mature forest image typical of state parks in the mountain region.

The aerial photograph on page 26 indicates areas with a slope greater than 15 percent in green. These areas have been overlaid on the 300-foot riparian buffers, shown in blue, that are required along the streams and shoreline. From the resulting image, it is clear that the opportunities for development will be limited to a relatively small land area within the park. To extend the constraint, many of the more gently sloped areas are small and isolated from one another. The geometry of these areas is often long and narrow, a reflection of the general shape of the peninsulas that make up the majority of the park land.

The southern half of Paddy Creek Peninsula contains the greatest concentration of areas with gentle slopes. Many of these areas are of considerable size and may be able to accommodate the development of facilities. Developable areas are also located on the upper elevations of the Center Parcel and along the ridgeline of Long Arm Peninsula.

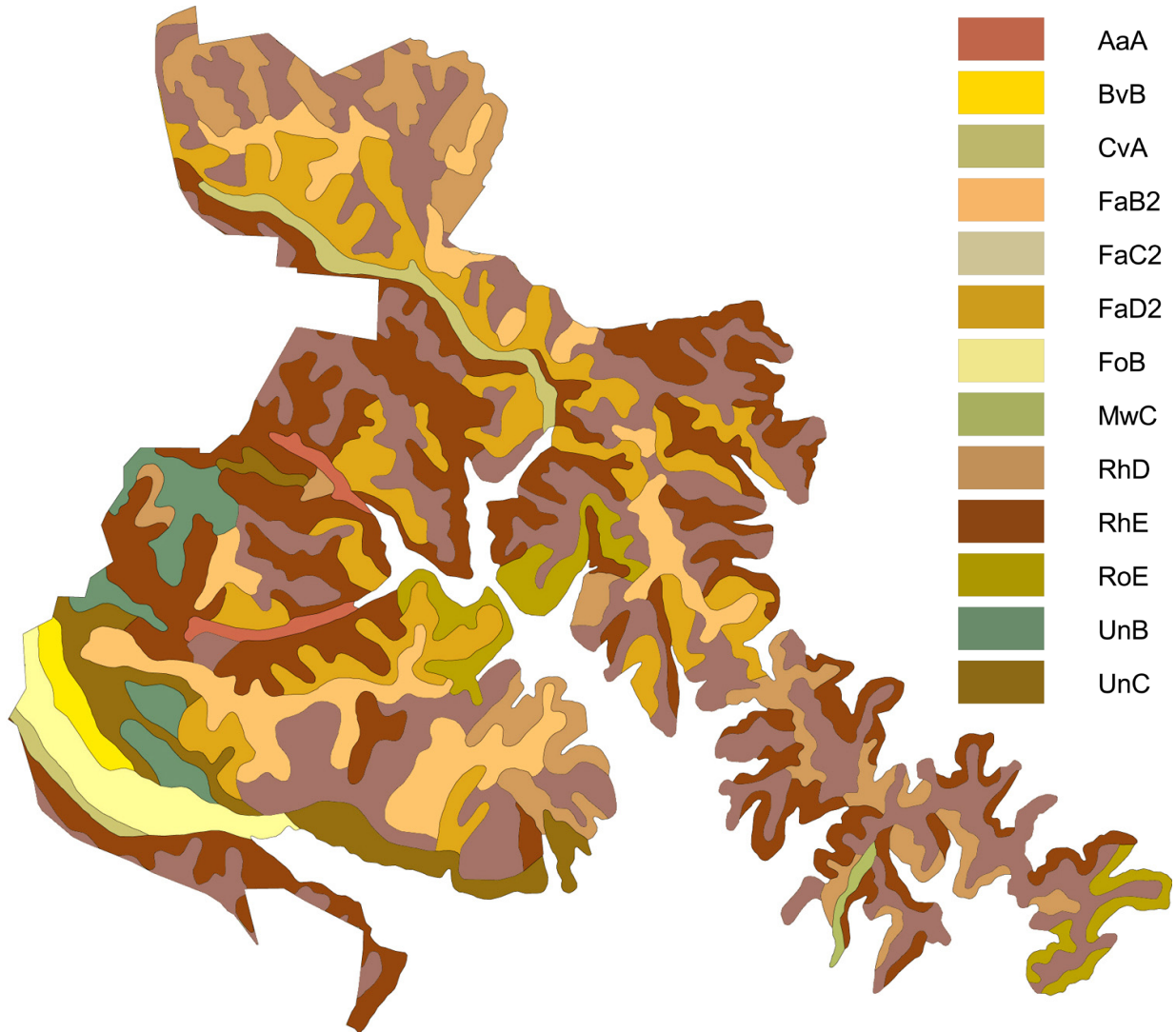


Hardwood forest, typical of stream drainage areas, steeper slopes and bottom lands



Maturing pine forest, typical of more gently sloped areas





The graphic above indicates the general location of various soil types within the new park land. A summary of the soil types and their suitability for development is located in the Appendix.



Poor soils on the new park site are generally associated with the bottoms of stream drainage areas and flood plain along Paddy Creek.

Soils within the park land are generally favorable to the development of facilities. The exceptions are silty or plastic soils found along the lower reaches of the creek basins and in the flood plain areas associated with Paddy Creek. Soil types and their associated development suitability are listed in the Appendix.

Flood plain pools were observed at the mouth of Paddy Creek where past storms, especially the hurricanes of fall 2004, created overflow corridors parallel to the main channel. These channels range from 30 to 150 feet in length and two to six feet in width. Their depth may be as little as an inch and up to three feet where scouring had been the greatest.

Only a few endangered or rare animals have been documented near the new park site. Due to sightings of Bald Eagles, a nesting platform was constructed near the eastern extent of Paddy Creek Peninsula. This area is documented and access is restricted. No evidence exists of eagles using the nesting platform. One rare plant, Northern Oconee Bells, has been recorded near the new park land. Two rare freshwater mussels, Brook Floater and Eastern Creekshell, have also been recorded in close proximity to the new park area.

More typical wildlife appears to be flourishing within the property. The site provides multiple sources of food and water. The various environments of open meadows, thickets, pine forests, mixed forests and hardwood forests provide a great variety of habitat. Deer forage along the meadow and woodland edges and birds populations are healthy. Black bear have been rumored to visit the site but no evidence was found to support these claims. Detailed information on wildlife can be found in the Site Survey Report prepared by Marshall Ellis, Brian Strong and John Taggart in June 2005.

The rocky character and landform of some shoreline areas is suitable for small-mouth bass spawning beds. Fish and birds are attracted to the structure and cover of the fallen trees that edge some areas of the shoreline. Generally, the shoreline of Lake James does not present a rich habitat for wildlife.



Bald Eagle



Virginia White-Tail Deer



Black Rat Snake



Raccoon



All of the streams located on the new park property have been characterized as clear with cobbles and sand in deeper sections and with boulders and exposed bedrock present. There are local areas of mud. The streams are generally stable with little undercutting. The streams are typically bordered by an understory of rosebay, rhododendron, mountain laurel and ferns under hemlock, poplar and white pine. The floodplain areas are covered with grasses and broadleaf herbs with river birch, sycamore and ironwood the dominant tree species.

Paddy Creek is the largest stream in the park with a width of 5 to 20 feet and large pool depths approaching five feet. The other perennial and intermittent streams on site are much smaller with widths between one and five feet. There are numerous small water cascades where the streams cross exposed bedrock.

The shallow depth and gentle nature of Paddy Creek does not reflect the broader character of this stream. Significant volumes of flood water can be conveyed through Paddy Creek. The image below of the arched culvert at Highway 126 begins to communicate the potential magnitude of water flow through the creek during storm events.

There are several inholding parcels located within the park site. These parcels are isolated tracts of privately owned land, each under 5 acres in size. The park roadway system has been designed to continue to provide access to the parcels. Several of the inholdings are cemeteries. The grave sites contained within give testament to the history of the families that occupied this land in generations past. If opportunities to acquire these parcels should arise, the state should purchase them.

Several additional graveyards have been discovered on the property that are not located within private parcels. Most of these sites are located on Long Arm Peninsula. These sites have not been maintained and can be difficult to identify as the forest has grown up around and within them. Dates on the markers indicate occupation back through the 1700s. None of the cemeteries have known historical interest.



The culvert where Paddy Creek passes beneath NC Highway 126

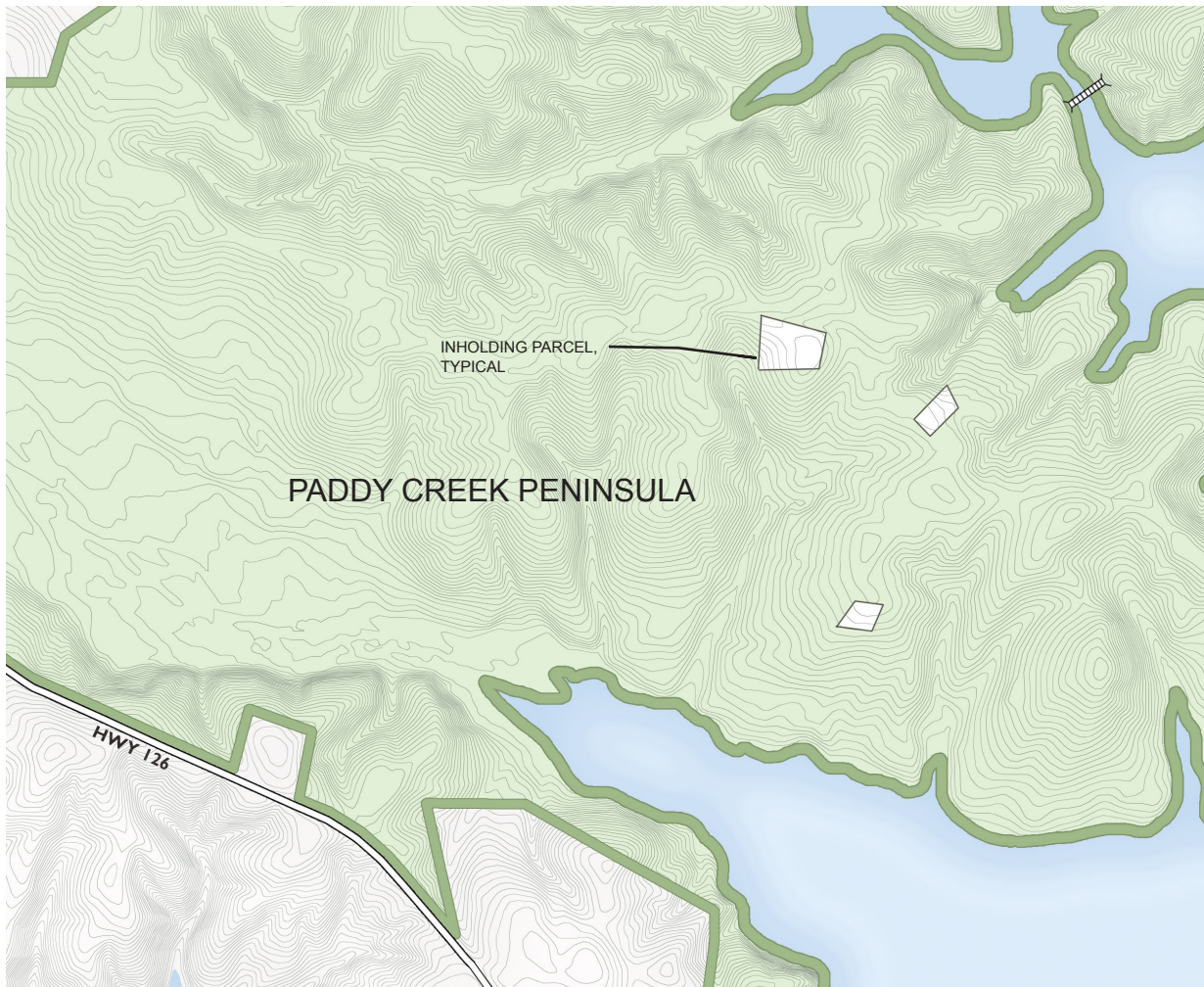




Undocumented cemetery discovered during site reconnaissance

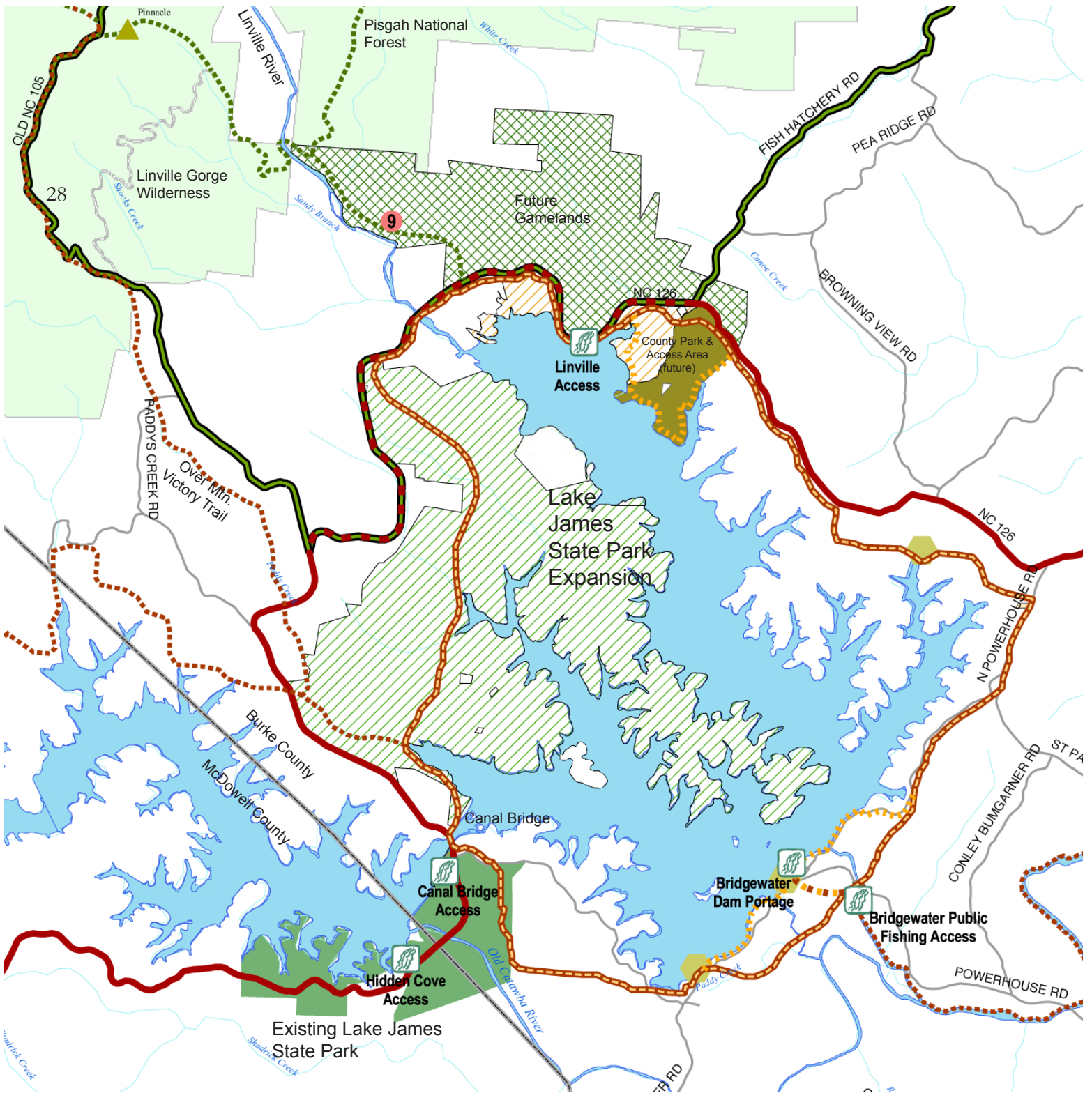


Grave marker from the 1700s



Inholding parcels on the Paddy Creek Peninsula. See the map on page 14 for the overall park site.





## Legend

- |  |                          |  |   |  |   |
|--|--------------------------|--|---|--|---|
|  | Future State Park        |  | Mountains-to-Sea Trail                                |  | Mountain Summits                                  |
|  | Future Gamelands         |  | Blue Ridge Parkway                                    |  | Upper Catawba River Canoe Trail Access            |
|  | County Access Areas      |  | Conceptual Lake James Trail Corridor                  |  | Conceptual County Pocket Parks                    |
|  | Lake James State Park    |  | Conceptual County Park Shoreline Spur                 |  | Points of Interest                                |
|  | Conceptual County Park   |  | Existing Canoe Portage Trail                          |  | 1- NPS Linville Falls Visitor Center              |
|  | Morganton Soccer Complex |  | Conceptual Overmountain Victory Trail - Foot Route    |  | 2- Linville Falls                                 |
|  | Catawba Meadows Park     |  | Over Mountain Victory / Mountains-to-Sea Shared Trail |  | 3- USFS Linville Gorge Info Cabin                 |
|  | Pisgah National Forest   |  | Over Mountain Victory Trail - Motor Route             |  | 4- USFS Linville Falls Access                     |
|  |                          |  | Motor Route Overlap with Scenic Byway                 |  | 5- Wiseman's View Access                          |
|  |                          |  | Catawba River Greenway                                |  | 6- Upper Creek Falls Access                       |
|  |                          |  | Pisgah Loop Scenic Byway                              |  | 7- Table Rock Fish Hatchery                       |
|  |                          |  |   |  | 8- Table Rock Mountain Access                     |
|  |                          |  |   |  | 9- Mountains-to-Sea Trail<br>Lake James Connector |



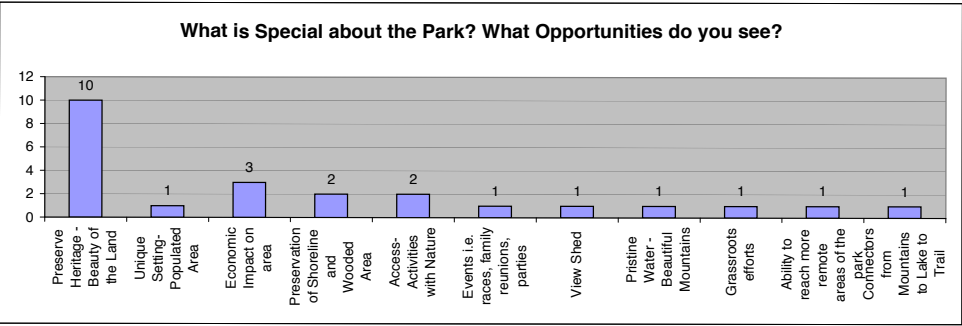
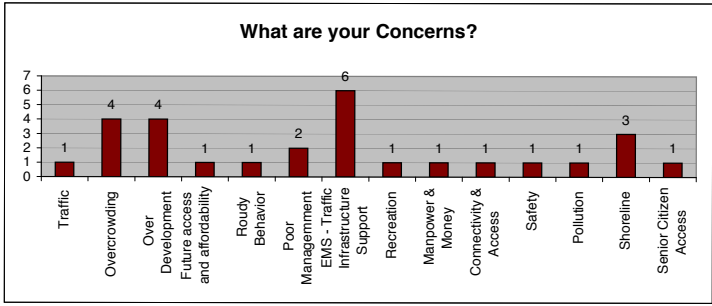
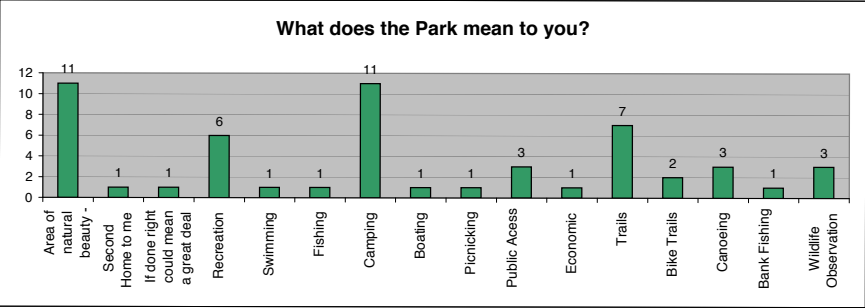
While farming and timber lands dominate the greater region around Lake James, the communities immediately surrounding the lake are experiencing tremendous change. Development of properties with lake frontage and lake access has dramatically increased over the past five years and continues at an accelerating pace. Recent residential developments have begun taking a more environmentally thoughtful approach regarding the lake, shoreline buffers, flood plains, wetlands and areas with steep slopes. The extent of lake associated development has drawn increased attention to water quality, shoreline aesthetics and levels of boating activity. People living near Lake James, but outside of lakeside developments, see their opportunities for lake access to be diminished. Fortunately, along with the new Lake James State Park, there are several initiatives under way that will improve public access and recreational activities on and around the lake.

Burke County plans to develop several new facilities. A new waterfront park adjacent to the Linville boat access area has been proposed. The park may include a new boat access ramp and RV and tent camping. Conceptual plans for the Lake James Trail corridor, a hike and bike trail that would encircle Lake James, have been developed. These plans call for county-managed pocket parks to be developed along the trail. A section of this trail linking Canal Bridge and the Linville River runs through the state park property and would be constructed as part of Lake James State Park. Development of this trail would link Lake James State Park with the future county parks as well as the future gamelands planned north of the Linville River. An extension of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail is planned to extend through the gamelands area that would provide trail access into the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area.

The Over Mountain Victory National Historic Trail commemorates the campaign leading to the battle of Kings Mountain by following the Revolutionary War route of patriot militia men from Virginia, today's eastern Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina to the battle site at Kings Mountain National Military Park in South Carolina. The trail corridor is 330 miles long with approximately 57 miles already constructed. A section of the Over Mountain Victory Trail, parallel to Paddy Creek, will run through Lake James State Park. The future extension of this trail will connect the State Park to nearby residential developments and the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area.

Duke Energy has announced several recreation improvements around Lake James as part of the Catawba River Recreation Plan. A canoe and kayak access area is planned at the Linville River. Water flow will be increased at controlled intervals to improve paddling opportunities on the Catawba River immediately downstream from Lake James. Duke is helping to acquire over 500 acres of property near the Bridgewater Powerhouse. Duke is also working to help acquire 434 acres along the Catawba River for recreation and conservation.

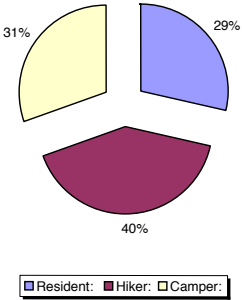




Participants in the Marion and Morganton Community Workshops completed surveys and questionnaires as part of the Public Input Process for the park master plan. The graphs above are a sample of the results from one survey group. The vertical scale indicates the number of people responding.

Comments from the workshops, recommendations from the Lake James State Park Advisory Committee, input from the division's Lake James Master Plan Committee and findings of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) were used to guide development of the program for the expansion of Lake James State Park.

**What is your relationship to Lake James State Park?**



In the chart to the left, survey results from the Marion Community Workshop

29% of the respondents were interested residents from nearby communities

31% of the respondents were residents that camp at Lake James State Park

40% of the respondents were residents that hike at Lake James State Park